



Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5860th meeting

Wednesday, 26 March 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:		
	Belgium	Mr. Verbeke
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Ms. Villalobos
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. De Rivièrè
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. McKenzie Smity
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (S/2008/181)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (S/2008/181)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Guinea-Bissau, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau and Head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Shola Omoregie.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Omoregie to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure an invitation to the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Brazil, Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti.

It is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mrs. Viotti (Brazil), took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting today in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/181, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by the representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Shola Omoregie, and the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Shola Omoregie.

Mr. Omoregie: Mr. President, the report before the Council, contained in document S/2008/181, is the thirtieth report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (UNOGBIS).

The report focuses in particular on developments linked to the mobilization of resources and the increased engagement of international partners with Guinea-Bissau. Of particular note are the signing of the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in January for Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance and the launch, also in January, of the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement in Guinea-Bissau.

I would like to say just a few words now to update the Council on developments that have taken place since the report was published. In this regard, I would like to start on a happy note.

Last night, President João Bernardo Vieira, who had heretofore been evasive on the subject of the date of the country's next legislative elections, announced that the elections will be held on 16 November 2008. This announcement, on the eve of this meeting of the

Security Council, will no doubt significantly reduce the tensions that have been building in the country in the past few days.

Meanwhile, preparations for the forthcoming legislative elections are moving forward very slowly. It was only recently that the Government opted for the biometric voter identity card registration process. Its decision was backed on 16 March by the parties signatory to the Political and Government Stability Pact on which the Government is based. A voter registration exercise involving the issuing of biometric cards would take five to six months. The voter registration exercise, which should have been carried out in January and February, is still behind schedule, mainly because of the impasse over arrears from previous elections estimated at \$1.7 million which should have been paid to the national and regional electoral commissions.

On 9 March, the Central Committee of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) declared null and void the decision taken by its leader, Carlos Gomes Jr., on 29 February, to withdraw political confidence in Prime Minister N'Dafa Cabi, who is the Third Vice-President of the PAIGC. The Central Committee's decision and support by the two other members of the Stability Pact alleviated disquiet among national and international actors that uncertainty over Mr. Cabi's position might have an impact on the positive momentum of the cooperation activities with the international community currently under way.

The PAIGC will be electing a new leader at its Congress which will take place from 3 to 6 April. The outcome of this contest will determine whether this current momentum will be sustained or seriously undermined.

The Peacebuilding Commission and the Government, with support from UNOGBIS and the United Nations country team, are working closely to prepare short-term projects for early funding from the Peacebuilding Fund, within the framework of a peacebuilding priority plan for Guinea-Bissau. In this initial phase, the projects implemented help build the confidence of national partners, yield immediate and visible dividends in the process of peace consolidation, and serve as a catalyst or impetus for the medium- to long-term assistance that will be provided by the Peacebuilding Commission under the wider umbrella

of the strategic framework for peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau.

The National Assembly passed the amnesty bill after a second reading on 4 March. It will now be submitted to President Vieira for ratification. This law is seen by its proponents as facilitating reconciliation and paving the way for security sector reform, and President Vieira and the military worked very hard for its passage.

The census of active personnel in the armed forces, funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ended on 19 March. The data, which are being processed and are expected to be ready by the end of this month, will inform decisions on the scope of future demobilization and retirement programmes. The census is a precondition for the full support of donors for the security sector reform. A census of veterans and security bodies will also need to be conducted.

On 17 March, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) organized, with financing by the Government of the United Kingdom, a consultation on security sector reform for the Security Sector Reform Steering Committee, which includes the United Nations and key multilateral and bilateral donors as members. The purpose of the consultation was to raise security sector knowledge capacity and assess the need for updating of the Government's security sector reform strategy. Its conclusions focused on the need to update the strategy in order to enhance efforts to combat narcotics and organized crime, strengthen national capacity, increase the role of non-State actors and devise an effective communication and awareness strategy.

The OECD followed that consultation with two days of consultations with the Technical Coordinating Committee on 18 and 20 March. These consultations focused on raising capacity and applying best practices to security sector reform in the Guinea-Bissau context. The consultation exercises identified the following challenges to security sector reform implementation.

First, there is a weak parliamentary oversight and control system. Second, there is a need for better aid coordination. Third, national capacity-building is required in key sectors. Fourth, there is a lack of support for civil society organizations. Fifth, a coherent communication and sensitization policy on security sector reform is lacking. And, finally, there is

a need to link security sector reform more coherently with the national anti-narcotics and poverty reduction strategy frameworks.

To conclude, I would like to highlight some key points.

First, the first quarter of 2008 has seen strong activity that illustrates the tangible progress by the Government in engaging the international community. In particular, the arrival of missions from the Peacebuilding Commission and of teams of technical assistants from the European Union, particularly in connection with the security sector reform, is creating expectations among the population of tangible peace dividends.

Change management is a long and delicate process in which expectations must be managed. A failure to manage these expectations would result in disillusionment that might ultimately jeopardize the long-term commitment necessary for implementing these reforms.

There is also a danger that the upsurge in donor activity may mask the reality that Government poverty reduction and security sector reform strategies are still massively underfunded. The international community therefore needs to remain engaged. While we are all aware that security sector reform is a key structural requirement, Guinea-Bissau continues to face massive social problems that need urgent solutions. It is important that the international community also earmark assistance so that the Government may implement its poverty reduction strategy.

We must acknowledge the need for better donor coordination in all sectors receiving overseas development assistance. The need to strengthen the existing coordination structure is particularly evident in the security sector in view of the arrival of various technical assistance teams to assist with the reform of that sector.

As a follow-up, it may be necessary for the donors to consider creating a multi-donor security sector reform trust fund in order to ensure a strategic coherence, identify gaps and develop a common donor vision. I have already informed partners that I intend to submit proposals to enhance our coordination efforts in the country.

I have also sought the cooperation of other departments and donors to map out the various security

sector activities in Guinea-Bissau, with a view to articulating possible value-added roles for the United Nations and non-United Nations entities involved in supporting the police and other law enforcement agencies of the country.

Depending on the outcome of a mapping resource meeting at headquarters here in April, I envision the possibility of a multicomponent assessment mission to Guinea-Bissau in the near future to evaluate the situation on the ground and identify the nature of any assistance that could be rendered. The Council would be informed of the outcome of the assessment mission.

The legislative elections are a key benchmark on the level of democratic maturity in the country. It is disappointing that preparations for the elections have been impeded because of resource problems, particularly with regard to arrears from previous elections. President Vieira wants to be sure that all conditions are met in order that elections are financially, technically and politically feasible.

Now that President Vieira has announced the date of the elections, it is important that the country's partners provide resources to enable elections to be held in November and to prevent the national stakeholders from using the lack of funds as a pretext not to move forward.

Finally, the Government of Guinea-Bissau is very concerned about the emerging threat of terrorism in the country. The recent case in January, in which two Mauritanian nationals were arrested in Bissau in connection with the murder of four French tourists in Mauritania and the subsequent threats of reprisals against Guinea-Bissau have led to concern by authorities that there is a terrorist threat in the country.

The Government has requested international assistance to strengthen its capacity to control its borders in order to combat this emerging threat. The arrest of the Mauritanians was an example of coordinated criminal intelligence exchange between the authorities of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau and also demonstrates the risk posed by porous borders. Subregional cooperation should be encouraged and supported in addressing the threats of terrorism especially in a region with porous borders.

The President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the

Peacebuilding Commission, Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil): I would like to thank you for the invitation to address the Security Council on the current situation in Guinea-Bissau and to inform on the progress made by the Peacebuilding Commission in support of peacebuilding efforts in that country.

Following the recommendation of the Council, the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission agreed to place the country on the Commission's agenda. A country-specific configuration for Guinea-Bissau was created, which I have the honour to chair. The objective of our work is to assess the main challenges and priorities for peacebuilding, in close contact with the authorities of Guinea-Bissau as well as to launch a strategic framework to address the most critical peacebuilding issues in the country.

Soon after the establishment of the country-specific configuration, I conducted an exploratory mission to Guinea-Bissau. The field visit had the objective of getting first-hand information on the current situation in the country and to initiate a dialogue with the Government and relevant stakeholders on the priorities for peacebuilding.

The mission also aimed at explaining the purpose and the process of the engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission with the country and at ensuring that the principle of country ownership is observed from the very beginning of the process.

During my visit, I had a discussion with the Prime Minister and met the Foreign Minister, the Secretary of State for International Cooperation, the Ministers of Finance, Economy, Justice, Interior, and Defence and the Minister of the Presidency, the Army Chief of Staff, representatives of civil society organizations, members of the diplomatic community resident in or accredited to Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations country team.

I left the country with the impression that there was a general expectation that the Peacebuilding Commission can be a turning point in the political and economic transition in Guinea-Bissau. In particular, the Government was looking forward to engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission as a catalyst for increased international support and for sustained

international attention to assist the country in consolidating peace and promoting development.

While in Bissau, I had the opportunity of witnessing the distress and adverse living conditions of the population, which threaten ongoing efforts to sustain peace and stability. On the other hand, as many authorities emphasized, the country has a great potential and is confident that, with international support, it will be able to attain political stability and sustained economic growth.

After I reported the results of my visit, the country-specific meeting on Guinea-Bissau had the opportunity to undertake a discussion based on a mapping of resources and gaps for peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. This exercise proved to be extremely useful in highlighting the various programmes undertaken in the country and the situation of aid flows as well as in identifying funding gaps within existing strategies and challenges not covered by any existing strategy.

The discussion was complemented by an examination of the situation of Guinea-Bissau on the basis of a background paper prepared by the Peacebuilding Support Office, as well as by the consideration of a draft outline for the strategic framework for peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau.

A high-level delegation of the Government of Guinea-Bissau, headed by Prime Minister Martinho N'Dafa Cabi, travelled to New York and made a presentation to the Peacebuilding Commission on the country's priorities and challenges for peacebuilding. The Representative of the Secretary-General in Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Shola Omoregie, also addressed the meeting. The presence at United Nations Headquarters of such a high-level delegation was a clear demonstration of the importance that the Government attaches to ongoing peacebuilding initiatives and illustrated once again its willingness to work together with the Commission towards consolidating peace and stability.

On the day of the visit, the country-specific meeting unanimously decided to advise the Secretary-General to declare Guinea-Bissau eligible for support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. I conveyed that decision to the Secretary-General, who, in turn, officially announced the eligibility of Guinea-Bissau for Peacebuilding Fund support. The declaration of eligibility triggered the process of establishing a

national steering committee in Guinea-Bissau, which will be in charge of analysing the specific projects to be financed with resources from the Peacebuilding Fund.

Following my field mission to Guinea-Bissau, the presentation by the Prime Minister, the various interactions with the Government and the preliminary discussions in the Commission, the country-specific meeting has been gaining a better understanding of the priorities for peacebuilding.

The challenges in the country include the areas identified by the Security Council, that is, building governmental capacity, promoting public sector reform, strengthening the rule of law, combating drug trafficking, implementing security sector reform and assisting the electoral process. Challenges also include the recurrent problem of salary arrears, improving the living conditions of the military, combating drug trafficking and organised crime, promoting human resources development and youth employment, addressing the needs of the vulnerable groups, rehabilitating the infrastructure, in particular the energy sector, and adopting measures to jump-start the revival of the economy.

In setting a strategic framework for peacebuilding, the PBC will now define the specific mix of measures and the sequencing of the actions it will undertake within each of the priority areas to support existing strategies and programmes, identify gaps and generate synergies among programmes, taking into account the progress achieved thus far in each of the peacebuilding priority areas. It is widely acknowledged that a key to addressing peacebuilding challenges in the country is the need to strengthen the Government's capacity to break the vicious circle in which institutional, political and economic instability are intricately linked.

The Peacebuilding Commission intends to tackle peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau through a two-track approach, interweaving immediate projects and rapid actions with medium- and long-term perspectives. There is growing recognition that, given the daunting array of challenges that Guinea-Bissau faces, peacebuilding priorities should be ranked according to the degree of urgency, importance and value added to peace consolidation efforts.

The strategic framework will outline the commitments of the Government of Guinea-Bissau and

those of the various stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, political parties, the United Nations system, the members of the Peacebuilding Commission, the international financial institutions, bilateral and multilateral donors and regional and subregional organizations. At the same time, it will provide a basis for further engagement with the country, a mechanism for effective coordination and a means of marshalling additional resources, which are so vitally needed.

As part of the process of developing the strategic framework, the Peacebuilding Commission intends to conduct a field mission to Guinea-Bissau, which will take place in early April 2008. Previous experiences in the Peacebuilding Commission have shown that field trips are invaluable to getting a better understanding of the country's challenges in the area of peacebuilding.

We trust that the Peacebuilding Commission will be in a position to provide further advice on peacebuilding priorities and challenges in Guinea-Bissau in the coming months. We hope that, as our work evolves, the Peacebuilding Commission will make a difference in ensuring a brighter future of political stability and economic prosperity for the people of Guinea-Bissau.

The President (spoke in Russian): I thank Her Excellency Mrs. Viotti for her briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Alfredo Lopes Cabral, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (spoke in French): On behalf of my delegation, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. I am grateful to the members of the Council for having agreed to my request to participate in this meeting.

My purpose today is to thank the members of the Security Council on behalf of my Government for having responded favourably to the request of our Government to inscribe Guinea-Bissau on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. The Council's response once again today should be interpreted as its agreement that our country deserves the attention of the international community and to have the Peacebuilding Commission focus on its case in particular in order to determine how we can work together to ensure that the situation changes for the

better. I would therefore like to say how pleased I am with the choice of the Brazilian Ambassador as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. Members of the Council will have noted from the briefing she has just delivered the excellent quality of the work done to date and how closely the whole of the Commission, the Guinea-Bissau configuration, officials of Guinea-Bissau and international partners are working together to ensure that we can put in place a new process that can provide more sustained attention to Guinea-Bissau.

We have taken note of the latest report (S/2008/181) of the Secretary-General. We are very pleased that he has recognized the efforts that have been made in Guinea-Bissau, which have led to substantial progress. In that regard, I do not think it an exaggeration to say that we are moving in the right direction to strengthen democracy. We now have in place an inclusive Government comprised of numerous parties. We are on our way to establishing an inclusive democracy, for we want a participatory democracy in Guinea-Bissau. We therefore agree with the Secretary-General that further efforts must be made to ensure that we can strengthen democracy in our country. There are, however, some conditions to be met in order to do that.

We are a poor country with problems and are in need of international assistance. I shall not refer to the content of the report, as members are familiar with it. I would simply like to say that we need the international community to help us move ahead with reforms, including the reform of the security and public administration sectors, in order to give new impetus to democracy and good governance alike. We also need the international community's assistance for our approach to human rights, which should not simply be theoretical but should ensure respect for human rights, civic protection and the access of all to genuine justice.

I should therefore like to dwell for a few moments on the amnesty law that has been voted on in Guinea-Bissau's National Assembly. This law does not mean that we want to promote a policy of impunity — quite the contrary. The amnesty law should be seen as part of an effort at national reconciliation. Of course, we will spare no effort to ensure that the crucial issue of impunity is resolved and that those who have committed crimes are brought to justice and receive the punishment they deserve under the law.

I would also like to refer to the upcoming elections. As the Representative of the Secretary-General pointed out a few moments ago, the date for those elections has been set. The fact is that it is not up to the country's President to unilaterally set the date for elections. There is a democratic process in place, which the Council and the international community support and which we have followed. It is up to the National Electoral Commission to assess the situation and, after having consulted the political parties, to make a recommendation to the President. I am pleased that the President yesterday promulgated the law setting 16 November as the date for the elections.

In conclusion, I would like to say that we are pleased with the cooperation we have established with the Peacebuilding Commission, and especially with its Guinea-Bissau configuration. That configuration is being led with great skill and determination and with the sensitivity for which our Brazilian friends are known — sensitivity which comes from their awareness of the situation in Africa in general and in Guinea-Bissau in particular. I am therefore hopeful that, under the leadership of our colleague Ambassador Viotti of Brazil, we will be able to work with the members of the Council to ensure that good governance becomes a reality in Guinea-Bissau, that democracy is strengthened in our country and that the elections — which constitute a decisive step towards strengthening democracy — take place.

I also hope that our case can receive greater attention and interest and that the international community will assess the situation in Guinea-Bissau anew, so that concerted efforts can be made to improve the situation. The ultimate objective of the efforts of the international community and our own efforts at the national level is to improve the living conditions of our people and ensure that we can at last live in a truly democratic country at peace with itself.

The President (spoke in Russian): I thank His Excellency Mr. Cabral for his statement.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite the members of the Council to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.